

PORTRAIT OF AN AMERICAN CITY
LINDA CASHDAN

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SERIES 5 NO.1

KEY WEST, FLORIDA...THE END OF THE RAINBOW
(INSERTS AVAILABLE IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR: THE HIGHWAY "U.S. ONE" BEGINS AT THE CANADIAN BORDER IN FORT KENT, MAINE, AND EXTENDS DOWN THE UNITED STATES FOR THE ENTIRE LENGTH OF THE EAST COAST, FROM ITS COLD NORTHEASTERN BEGINNING TO THE TROPICAL CLIMATE OF THE NATION'S SOUTHEAST, THROUGH MASSACHUSETTS, NEW YORK, VIRGINIA, NORTH CAROLINA, GEORGIA...DOWN, DOWN, DOWN...THROUGH THE STATE OF FLORIDA, AND BEYOND. AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA, THE UNITED STATES MAINLAND STOPS, BUT U.S. HIGHWAY ONE CONTINUES, JOINING THE THIRTY TWO ISLANDS THAT MAKE UP THE "FLORIDA KEYS" TO THE FLORIDA MAINLAND. U.S. ONE BECOMES NARROW AT TIMES -- OFTEN NO WIDER THAN A TWO LANE BRIDGE -- AND THE DRIVE IS A LITTLE LIKE TAKING A SEA VOYAGE BY AUTOMOBILE. SEVERAL OF THE FLORIDA KEYS ARE DEVELOPED, BUT THERE ARE PLACES ALONG THIS HIGHWAY WHERE THE ONLY SIGHT IS SHIMMERING WATER IN SHADES OF TURQUOISE AND EMERALD AND AN OCCASIONAL SEAGULL OR PELICAN DIVING FOR A CATCH. FINALLY, 160 KILOMETERS FROM THE FLORIDA MAINLAND, U.S. ONE ENDS. SO DOES THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. THE END IS SIGNIFIED BY A SMALL SIGN AT THE VERY TIP OF THE VERY LAST OF THE FLORIDA KEYS. IT SAYS: "THIS IS KEY WEST, THE END OF THE RAINBOW"

TAPE: CUT ONE -- MONTAGE OF VOICES:

1) "THE END OF THE RAINBOW THEY CALL IT, AND I BELIEVE THEY'RE RIGHT...2) THE WHOLE CONCEPT OF THIS BEING THE 'LAST RESORT' BRINGS IN ALL KINDS OF QUESTIONS AS TO WHAT MOTIVATES PEOPLE TO COME HERE FROM A PSYCHOLOGICAL VIEWPOINT. IT'S A WHOLE DIFFERENT WORLD, FOR SURE. ...3) IT'S JUST A

TAPE: CITY. SOMETIMES YOU SAY 'I DON'T KNOW WHY I COME HERE',
(CONT'D) BUT WHEN YOU LEAVE, YOU CAN'T WAIT TO GET BACK HERE."

VOICE: KEY WEST FLORIDA IS A SPIT OF SAND AND CORAL 6 KILOMETERS
LONG AND 2 KILOMETERS WIDE WITH A PERMANENT POPULATION OF
30,000 AND A FLAVOR ALL ITS OWN. IT IS SURROUNDED BY THE
GULF OF MEXICO ON ONE SIDE, THE ATLANTIC OCEAN ON THE OTHER
WATERS WHICH HOUSE SOME 600 DIFFERENT VARIETIES OF FISH AND
PROVIDE SOME OF THE BEST DEEP SEA FISHING IN THE WORLD.
ITS WATERS ATTRACT FISHERMEN AND SCUBA DIVERS WHILE ITS
BALMY TEMPERATURES AND SUNNY VILLAGE ATMOSPHERE ATTRACT
OLDER AMERICANS ON RETIREMENT PENSIONS. ITS DISTANCE FROM
THE MAINLAND -- FROM "CIVILIZATION" -- GIVES IT AN EXOTIC
ISOLATED CHARM THAT APPEALS TO ARTISTS AND WRITERS. PUT ALL
THESE INGREDIENTS -- THE SUN, THE WARMTH, THE CHARM --
TOGETHER, AND YOU HAVE A NUMBER ONE TOURIST ATTRACTION.

TAPE: CUT TWO -- SOUND OF TRAIN BELL, THEN TOURIST GUIDE'S REMARKS
FROM LOUD SPEAKER: (FADE AT WILL BEHIND VOICE)

"THE YELLOW BUILDING COMING UP ON MY RIGHT IS THE KEY WEST
ART CENTER. IT BECAME KEY WEST'S FIRST COMMUNITY ART
CENTER IN 1938. DURING WORLD WAR TWO, IT WAS USED AS
HEADQUARTERS FOR THE AMERICAN RED CROSS AND IN 1960,
A GROUP OF LOCAL ARTISTS RESTORED THE BUILDINGS TO USE IT
AS AN ART CENTER..."

VOICE: THERE IS A PERFUME FACTORY IN KEY WEST, AND A SMALL CIGAR
FACTORY, AND A SMALL SEA FARMING INDUSTRY, WHERE SHRIMP ARE
RAISED, AND THERE ARE SEVERAL HANDICRAFT OUTLETS. BUT THE
REAL INDUSTRY IS TOURISM. IT IS HARD TO WALK AROUND THE
ISLAND WITHOUT COMING ACROSS ONE OF THE MANY LITTLE CANOPIED
OPEN AIR TRAINS -- FILLED WITH TOURISTS -- THAT RUN UP AND
DOWN THE STREETS OF KEY WEST POINTING OUT HISTORICAL

VOICE: LANDMARKS. IT IS A TOWN THAT IS RICH IN HISTORY, AND
(CONT'D) PREOCCUPIED WITH HISTORY:

TAPE: CUT THREE -- MC COY

"THIS WAS A FAVORITE BATTLE GROUND FOR THE INDIANS. THEY WOULD COME HERE AND FIGHT. AND WHEN THE EARLY SPANIARD SAILED HERE, THERE WERE JUST PILES AND PILES OF HUMAN BONES OUT BLEACHING IN THE SUN. THEY REFERRED TO THIS ISLAND AS "CAYO HUESO" WHICH, IN SPANISH, MEANS DRY BONES."

VOICE: THIS IS CHARLES MCCOY, MAJOR OF KEY WEST FLORIDA...

TAPE: CUT FOUR -- MCCOY

"THE ANGLICANS HEARD "CAYO HUESO" AND IN THEIR ANGLICAN USAGE OF THE WORDS, THEY TRANSLATED "CAYO" AS "KEY" AND "HUESO" AS "WEST." SO THEY CALLED IT 'KEY WEST' AND THAT IS HOW THE NAME BECAME WHAT IT IS."

VOICE: LIKE ITS NAME, KEY WEST'S EARLY HISTORY WAS PART SPANISH, PART ENGLISH. THE BRITISH CAME FROM THE BAHAMAS, AND THE SPANIARDS CAME TO KEY WEST FROM CUBA, WHICH IS, IN FACT, 144 KILOMETERS AWAY ACROSS THE WATER. THE SAME CORAL REEF OFF THE COAST OF KEY WEST WHICH ATTRACTS TOURISTS TODAY FOR ITS BEAUTY AND RICH SUPPLY OF FISH, ATTRACTED KEY WEST'S FIRST PERMANENT INHABITANTS...BUT FOR OTHER REASONS:

TAPE: CUT FIVE -- MCCOY

"KEY WEST HAS THE ONLY REEF IN THE UNITED STATES. AND BECAUSE OF THE REEF, A LOT OF SHIPS WOULD RUN AROUND, AND A VERY PROFITABLE AND VERY LUCRATIVE INDUSTRY BUILT UP HERE CALLED "WRECKING." THEY WOULD GO OUT AND SALVAGE FROM THE WRECKED SHIPS."

VOICE: IT WAS A PROFITABLE ACTIVITY. IN 1840 KEY WEST WAS THE RICHEST CITY PER CAPITA IN THE UNITED STATES. BUT ONE HUNDRED YEARS LATER -- IN 1933 -- KEY WEST WAS ONE OF THE MOST DEPRESSED VICTIMS OF THE U.S. DEPRESSION, ONE OF THE POOREST CITIES IN THE NATION. IT WAS THE BEGINNING OF

VOICE: MANY UPS AND DOWNS FOR KEY WEST, FLORIDA. THE U.S.
CONT'D) GOVERNMENT TRIED TO BOLSTER THE ECONOMY BY ENCOURAGING
PEOPLE TO TRAVEL TO KEY WEST, HAILING THE SOUTHERN MOST
CITY AS AN IDEAL TOURIST RESORT. THE EFFORT WORKED:
IN 1934, 40,000 TOURISTS MADE THE POOR INHABITANTS OF KEY
WEST A GOOD DEAL RICHER. BUT THE NEXT YEAR -- IN 1935 --
A HURRICANE HIT ISLAMORADO, A KEY 50 MILES NORTH OF KEY
WEST AND THE STORM WIPED OUT THE RAILROAD LINE THAT
CONNECTED KEY WEST WITH THE MAINLAND. THE PEOPLE OF KEY
WEST WENT TO THE GOVERNMENT AND BORROWED 4-AND-A-HALF
MILLION DOLLARS TO BUILD U.S. ONE, THE OVERSEAS HIGHWAY
THAT WOULD CONNECT KEY WEST AND ALL THE OTHER KEYS WITH
THE MAINLAND. IN 1938 THE HIGHWAY WAS COMPLETED, AND
TOURISM FLOURISHED. THEN WORLD WAR II BROKE OUT, AND
GAS AND TIRE RATIONING IN THE UNITED STATES PUT AN END
TO THE KEY WEST BOOM. BUT THE VACATION CENTER BECAME A BIG
MILITARY BASE INSTEAD,

TAPE: CUT SIX -- MC COY

"ALL THE WATERFRONT WAS TAKEN OVER BY THE MILITARY, AND,
OF COURSE THEN THE CITY WAS GEARED JUST TO ACCOMODATE THE
MILITARY. THEY HAVE ESSENTIALLY LEFT NOW, BUT DURING ALL
THIS TIME, THERE WAS A GREAT INFLUX OF MILITARY, AND THEY
LIKED THE PLACE. AND THEY HAVE ALWAYS TENDED TO RETIRE
HERE, SO THERE'S A GREAT RETIRED MILITARY POPULATION ON THE
ISLAND."

TAPE: CUT SEVEN -- WONDERS

"IT'S A BUSY LITTLE CITY AND IT HAS MANY ATTRACTIONS..."

VOICE: THIS IS RENELVA WONDERS, A FARMER'S WIFE FROM ANCONA,
ILLINOIS, WHO FIRST SAW KEY WEST ABOUT 25 YEARS AGO,
WHEN SHE VISITED HER BROTHER-IN-LAW WHO WAS STATIONED IN
THE NAVY THERE. IT WAS LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT.

TAPE: CUT EIGHT -- WONDERS

"ONE EVENING I WENT TO MAIL SOME LETTERS, AND I WALKED ABOUT FOUR BLOCKS IN THE VELVET DUSK. IT WAS BEAUTIFUL. I WAS SURROUNDED BY THE ISLAND FEELING...AND ONLY THOSE WHO COME TO AN ISLAND COULD REALIZE WHAT I MEAN. IT REALLY GETS TO ME STILL."

VOICE: NOW IN HER LATE FIFTIES, MRS. WONDERS DRIVES DOWN TO KEY WEST WITH HER HUSBAND, KENNETH, EVERY YEAR WHEN THE GROUND UP IN ILLINOIS FREEZES, AND STAYS UNTIL THE FIRST WEEK IN MARCH. SHE IS ONE OF MANY RETIRED AND PARTIALLY RETIRED ADULTS WHO ARE KEY WEST ENTHUSIASTS. WRITERS AND ARTISTS LIKE IT, TOO, LARGELY BECAUSE ITS ISOLATION HAS GIVEN KEY WEST, OVER THE YEARS, A LOOSE, "ANYTHING GOES" ATTITUDE, AN END-OF-THE-LINE APPROACH TO LIFE. ERNEST HEMINGWAY WROTE ONE OF HIS NOVELS THERE IN THE NINETEEN THIRTIES. INDEED HIS HOME IS A VERY POPULAR PART OF THE KEY WEST TOUR. PLAYWRIGHT TENNESSEE WILLIAMS STILL WRITES THERE. IT IS NOT AT ALL RARE TO FIND A TRUMAN CAPOTE OR OTHER WELL KNOWN AUTHOR SIPPING A DRINK AT ONE OF THE PICTURESQUE BARS THAT ADORN DUVAL STREET, IN KEY WEST'S NEWLY RENOVATED "OLD TOWN."

BUT IF THE END-OF-THE-ROAD ATTITUDE HAS CONTRIBUTED TO KEY WEST'S HERITAGE, IT ALSO CONTRIBUTED TO KEY WEST'S BIGGEST RECENT PROBLEM: HIPPIES, OR, AS MAYOR MCCOY REFERS TO THEM: "TRANSIENT UNPRODUCTIVES."

TAPE: CUT NINE -- MCCOY

"THEY WOULD START GOING SOUTH AND WHEN THEY RAN OUT OF PLACES TO GO, THIS WAS IT, BECAUSE THIS WAS THE VERY END. THEY BECAME A CONCERN TO ALL THE CITIZENS. IT REACHED ITS PEAK, I'D SAY, FIVE YEARS AGO, AND IT HAS BEEN ON A DECLINE SINCE."

VOICE: THE HIPPIES LIVED IN THE OLDEST AREA OF TOWN, STREETS WHICH WERE THRIVING DURING THE DAYS THE NAVY WAS STATIONED THERE, BUT HAD SINCE BECOME LARGELY DESERTED AFTER THE SAILORS' DEPARTURE. THE EMPTY OLD BUILDINGS WERE PERFECT MAKESHIFT DWELLINGS FOR THE ROOTLESS. THE HIPPIE PRESENCE INHIBITED THE REGULAR KEY WEST POPULATION SO MUCH THAT THE CITIZENS STOPPED WALKING IN THAT AREA COMPLETELY.

TAPE: CUT TEN -- MCCOY

"I THOUGHT ANOTHER APPROACH WAS BETTER. I STARTED TO REJUVENATE THE DOWNTOWN AREA BY TRYING TO FIX THE STREETS UP, PUT SOME PLANTING DOWN, PUT OUT SOME OLD STREET LAMPS THAT REFLECTED WHAT IT WAS LIKE AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY."

VOICE: THE IDEA CAUGHT ON. RUSTED STORES WERE REPLACED BY STORES WITH RUSTIC CHARM. MOST OF THE HIPPIES LEFT. AND THE OLD PART OF TOWN MAYOR MCCOY SAYS, WITH PLEASURE, IS WELL ON ITS WAY TO LOOKING LIKE BEAUTIFUL TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY SEAPORT.

ITS INHABITANTS SHOULD ENJOY THAT, BECAUSE THE ONE THING THAT KEY WEST PEOPLE OF ALL AGES SEEM TO SHARE IS AN APPRECIATION FOR BEAUTY. KEY WEST IS PROBABLY THE ONLY CITY IN THE UNITED STATES, FOR EXAMPLE, WHERE HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE GATHER EACH NIGHT JUST TO WATCH THE SUN SET: ...AND THEN APPLAUD LOUD AND LONG IF IT IS AN ESPECIALLY BEAUTIFUL SUNSET.

EVERYONE WHO LIVES THERE THINKS KEY WEST IS SPECIAL, BUT EVERYONE HAS A DIFFERENT REASON. THE SUNSETS...THE SUNRISE... THE BEACHES...MRS. WONDERS LIKES THE VIEW FROM HER WINDOW:

TAPE: CUT TWELVE -- WONDERS

"I AM LOOKING AT SKY MEETING THE OCEAN AND THE VARIATIONS
OF SOFT BLUE. I DO MY HOUSEWORK, AND I LIFT UP MY EYES AND
IT'S THE MOST RESTFUL THING. IT'S GOD-GIVEN FOR US ALL, IF
WE JUST COME HERE."

VOICE: KEY WEST SCENERY IS ENOUGH TO TURN EVEN THE HARDENED
POLITICIAN INTO A POET:

TAPE: CUT THIRTEEN -- MC COY

"IF I HAD TO SELECT ONE LITTLE PLACE HERE THAT IS MY
FAVORITE VIEW, IT WOULD BE ABOUT 15 FEET UNDER WATER ON
THE FLORIDA REEF. IT IS AN UNDERWATER W RLD BEYOND
IMAGINATION AND INDESCRIBABLE UNLESS YOU'VE EXPERIENCED
IT. THE COLORS ARE EVERY HUE OF THE RAINBOW. THERE ARE
FISH YOU HAVE NEVER SEEN BEFORE. THE UNDERWATER WORLD OF
THE REEF IS VERY PEACEFUL. IT'S QUIET. IT'S GORGEOUS.
IT'S SERENE. ...UNTRoubLED BY THE THINGS THAT HUMANS
SURROUND THEMSELVES WITH."

VOICE: MAYOR CHARLES MCCOY...MAYOR OF KEY WEST FLORIDA, THE END OF
THE RAINBOW.

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